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ABSTRACT

Before the U.S. Civil War, vocational education was relegated to apprenticeship training and a few scattered schools dedicated to the purpose. The Civil War brought widespread death and destruction throughout the South. By the end of the war, half of the land mass and population of the reunited United States of America had been destroyed. A major portion of the remaining population was illiterate. A large number of workers needed skill training for employment, especially in the emerging industrial era. Model schools, such as the Hampton Institute (Virginia), sent graduates to start schools in the South. The most famous of these graduates was Booker T. Washington, who founded the Tuskegee Institute (Alabama). During the early 1900s, southern senators and representatives authored federal legislation that catapulted vocational educators into the position of the U.S. employment and training specialists. (Author/KC)

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The Impact of the Civil War on Vocational Education

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Abstract

Before the Civil War, vocational education was relegated to apprenticeship training and a few scattered schools dedicated to this purpose. The Civil War brought widespread death and destruction throughout the South. By the end of the war, half of the land mass and population of the reunited United States of America had been destroyed. A major portion of the population remaining was illiterate. A large number of blacks and whites needed skill training for employment, especially in the emerging industrial era. Model schools, such as the Hampton Institute, sent graduates to start schools in the South. The most famous of these was Booker T. Washington's development of Tuskegee Institute. During the 1900s, southern senators and representatives authored federal ledgislation that catapulted vocational education into the position of America's employment and training specialists.

Prior to the Civil War

During the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century, education in America progressed from being a church related function to a public tax-supported system. Massachusetts emerged as a leader in education for the general welfare of the nation, as stated in the preamble to the Constitution. Free public education was an effort to educate all people, the poor as well as the rich. Higher education, though, was still a function of private institutions that only the wealthy could afford. Manual labor schools were developed as a means of preparing the poor and working classes in the skills needed for the expanding industrial market in the Northeast (Barlow, 1976a). During the 1840s and 1850s, several schools of this type were established specifically for the education of people of African descent. They were located in the Northeast and supported through philanthropy. Instruction was in the areas of bricklaying, carpentry, printing, tailoring, shoemaking, brickmaking, and blacksmithing. A certificate of completion qualified the graduate to practice in the trade without having to serve as an apprentice (Hall, 1973). This was an important circumvention since the apprenticeship programs had been controlled by organized labor from the early 1800s. Labor unions attempted "to control the number and duration of apprenticeships in order to protect wage standards and work quality" (Dictionary of American History, 1976, p. 60).

At the same time, the South welcomed apprenticeship training for their slaves. "Many of the plantation owners encouraged their slaves to acquire as many different skills as possible, because a slave who possessed the knowledge of several trades was valued more than one who was unskilled" (Hall, 1973, p. 5). But, by 1840 white skilled workers were concerned about the competition. Additionally, at least six states had laws prohibiting the teaching of reading or writing to slaves (Cohen, 1974). The last two decades prior to the Civil War saw the end of virtually all training for slaves. By the end of the war "practically all apprenticeship programs were closed to blacks" (Hall, 1973, p. 19).

The Civil War (1861-1865)

Eleven southern states seceded from the Union over the question of slavery and the Civil War began. It was fought primarily on southern ground for four years. An estimated 650,000 Union soldiers were killed with many more than that killed from the Confederate forces. "The North's overwhelming preponderance of war-making potential-people, wealth, and economic power" (The Volume Library, 1982, p. 2233) ultimately was the deciding factor. Unfortunately, by the time Lee surrendered at Appomattox, the South had been completely devastated. The towns and plantations had been burned, most of the next generation of males were dead, and the only wealth remaining was in the hands of those

who chose to take advantage of the sick and hungry. The political clout of the southern plantation owners had been transferred to the northern industrialists (The Volume Library, 1982). As a result, industrialization and westward expansion became the focal points of federal and legislative concern.

In the meantime, the South was overwhelmed by the shear numbers of people, both black and white, that needed employment to support themselves and their families. Education was viewed by all as the key to success. As the southern states rejoined the Union, land grants for agricultural and mechanical colleges, which were provided under the Morrill Act of 1862, made higher education a reality for the South during a time when the need for expertise in these two areas could not have been greater. Four southern states (Mississippi, Virginia, South Carolina, and Kentucky) established land-grant colleges for blacks as well as colleges for whites. It was not until the Second Morrill Act of 1890 that all of the southern states established or designated land-grant colleges for blacks (Hall, 1973).

After the Civil War

General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the son of American missionaries to Hawaii, had headed a Negro regiment during the war. He had been selected for that position due to his extensive experience in educating the illiterate people of Hawaii. Both experiences proved valuable when, in 1866, he was appointed

superintendent of education for the Negroes of Virginia. Immediately he began the development of what became Hampton Institute (Barlow, 1976b).

Hampton Institute opened in 1868 based on the philosophy that there was dignity in all forms of work and that human beings, regardless of race, could only truly appreciate that which they had earned. Therefore, students at Hampton were expected to work for the school to earn their tuition. This began the manual labor school movement in America. The idea was not original with Armstrong, himself having been educated in such a way. While in Hawaii, he had attended the Royal School for Hawaiian Chiefs where some manual labor was required of everyone (Hall, 1973).

By far, Hampton's most famous graduate was Booker T. Washington who, in 1881, was recommended by Armstrong to become principal of a new school at Tuskegee, Alabama (Thornbrough, 1969). With only $2,000, Washington started Tuskegee Institute based on the same foundational principles that his mentor had established for Hampton Institute. Both Washington and Tuskegee grew in fame and national acclaim in the years that followed. Vocational programs were developed for "foundry, electricity, machine shop and stationary engineering, painting, plumbing and steamfitting, printing, tailoring, carpentry, blacksmithing, basketmaking, harness making, bricklaying, brickmaking, wheelwrighting, and tinsmithing" (Hall, 1973, p. 52). By the time

of Washington's death in 1915, Tuskegee owned 2,300 acres of land, 123 buildings, and more than $1,000,000 worth of equipment (Hall, 1973).

The first school for the training of manual skills and tool instruction was established in St. Louis by Calvin Woodward in 1879. This was a part of the engineering department of Washington University. During the ensuing 35 years, the trade school movement rapidly expanded throughout America as a means of interesting young people in vocations associated with the rising industrial economy. By 1901, corporations had begun their own training programs to help address the need for skilled, literate workers (Barlow, 1976c).

Contributions from the South

In 1917, Senator Hoke Smith and Representative Dudley M. Hughes, both of Georgia, sponsored bills in the Senate and House of Representatives, respectfully, that gave Federal government recognition and support to vocational education. As with any new investment of federal monies, an accountability board was created. The Federal Board for Vocational Education was to oversee the distribution and expenditure of funds. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was the first major legislation to address vocational education, specifically home economics, agriculture, and trades and industry (Barlow, 1976c). Fifty years prior, Sherman had burned most of Georgia's civilization to the bare earth. Georgia

had rebuilt and now her legislators were paving the way for employment of her people. But alas, the United States officially declared war only two months later. Most of the young men who potentially would have benefited from Smith-Hughes monies were sent into combat. Fortunately, World War I ended less than two years later (The Volume Library, 1982).

A new problem faced America. Thousands of young men were returning from war with permanent disabilities, placing many families without a breadwinner. The federal government recognized its responsibility to these people and passed the Vocational Rehabilitation Act just prior to the end of World War I in 1918. Once again, vocational education embraced its mission of providing employment training; once again, its student population mass was composed of war-torn people. So well was the mission accomplished that in 1920 Senator Smith teamed up with Representative William Bankhead of Alabama to sponsor legislation to provide monies for vocational rehabilitation of persons disabled in business and industry. During this period America's economy was flourishing and the future appeared bright, but Southeners still lagged behind socioeconomically and educationally.

The next two decades saw the stock market crash in 1929 and the Great Depression that followed. Also in 1929, Senator George of Georgia and Representative Reed of Missouri authored a bill to provide monies for vocational home economics and agriculture to

assist the millions of people forced to live off the land. There was no need for industrial training given the economic situation. (Note: Missouri and Kentucky never seceeded from the Union but both established separate governments and sent delegates to both the Confederate and Union Congresses. As a result, both states are included in the Confederacy [The World Book, 1957].) In 1934 Senator George and Representative Ellzey of Mississippi sponsored a bill to establish funding for the three areas originally provided for in the Smith-Hughes Act. When this Act expired in 1937, Senator George and Representative Deen of Georgia wrote legislation to reauthorize funding for home economics, agriculture, and trades and industry, but this time distributive education was included (Roberts, 1965).

America was just beginning to get back on her feet economically when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, and once again war was declared. For almost four years men and material resources were sent overseas to support the war effort. Meanwhile at home, American women were receiving vocational training and industrial employment. Millions of women were needed to maintain the high production workforce war required. When World War II ended in 1945, women reluctantly left their jobs to return to full-time homemakers. The G.I. Bill was now in effect (1944) and vocational classrooms were packed with war veterans. In 1946 Senator George with Representative Barden of North Carolina

proposed an amendment to the George-Deen Act to allow for increased funding (Roberts, 1965).

The 1950s experienced the baby boomers entering school and the race for space. The turbulent 60s were pockmarked by civil rights marches, drug addicts, assassinations, and the Vietnam War. During this time Representative Carl D. Perkins of Kentucky emerged as a strong advocate for vocational education. He served as the primary force in writing, introducing, and supporting legislation that became the Vocational Education Acts of 1963 and 1984. The latter was renamed the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act.

Conclusion

Some form of vocational education has been around since the beginning of time. Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew records refer to artificers of bronze and brass (Genesis 4:22). The progression of vocational education through the centuries was slow but steady. Mankind had just begun to transfer this training into the classroom setting when the Civil War began. This war single handedly thrust vocational education into the forefront. There were thousands of people to educate and half the nation to rebuild. Employment was the key to survival and employment hinged on skill training. The South had everything to gain and nothing to lose by avidly developing and supporting vocational education. In fact, history is replete with outstanding

vocational education legislation authored by southern senators and representatives. The Civil War was certainly the origin of modern vocational education!

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